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SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT INSIGHT

ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to assist the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and Development Partners in decision making and in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments.

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

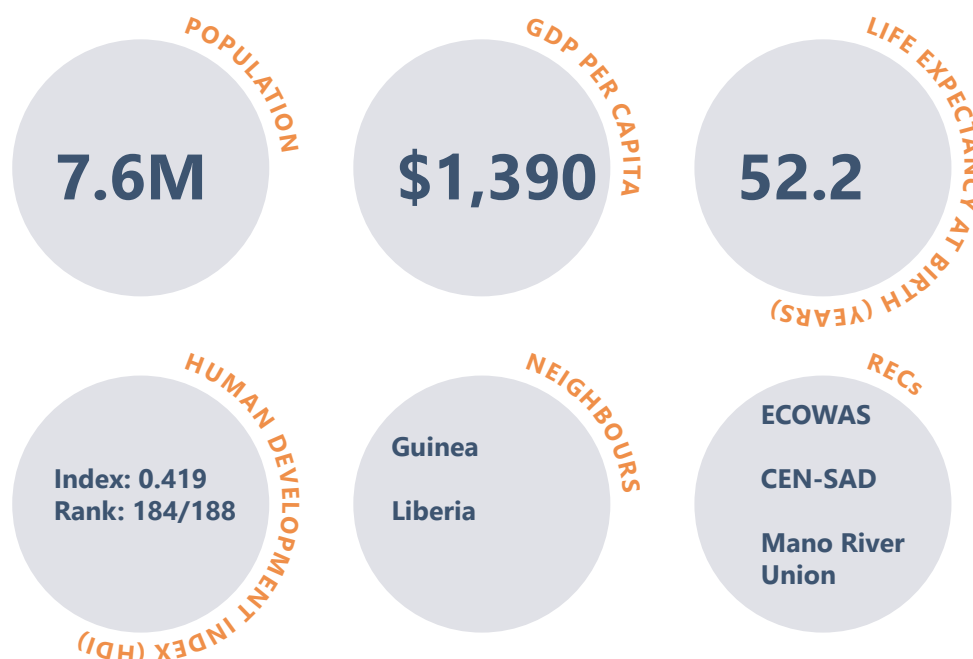


Figure 1: Country profile and demographics

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) 2018.

In March 2018, Sierra Leone held a general election to elect a new president, members of parliament, and local councils. It was the fourth cycle of elections since the end of the decade-long civil war (1992-2002) when 70,000 people were killed and 2.6 million displaced in the conflict that ravaged the country’s political, economic and social systems.ⁱ While the country has continued to show resilience after the civil war in its ability to organize and conduct elections and ensure peaceful transitions of power, some of the elections were marred by sporadic violence that revealed the existing tensions in the country.

Sierra Leone is over-dependent on subsoil assets such as diamonds, iron ore and oil, among others. In addition, tourism is a significant foreign exchange earner and job provider with an important contribution to the country’s development. In 2017, the sector contributed 4.1% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.7% of total employment.ⁱⁱ In 2018, these contributions were expected to grow by 4.5% and 0.9% respectively.ⁱⁱⁱ Beyond its biodiversity, the fact that the country was founded as a home for former American slaves makes it an attractive destination for tourists around the world. Yet the civil war and more recently, the Ebola crisis, negatively impacted tourism in the country.

ⁱ UNDP. (2006). *Evaluation: UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries, case study Sierra Leone*, p.4. Retrieved from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/thematic/conflict/SierraLeone.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Turner, R. (2018). *Travel & tourism economic impact 2018, Sierra Leone*. World travel & tourism council. Page 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Turner, R. (2018). *Ibid*. Page 1.

In order to sustain its public and private sectors, the country relies on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) partners such as the European Union (EU), China, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which together represented 14.1% of Sierra Leone’s GDP in 2016.^{iv} Despite its numerous assets, Sierra Leone seeks to attain middle-income status by 2035 but faces negative post-conflict conditions of high youth unemployment, corruption, weak governance and a volatile economy. It is exposed to inflation (the current accounts of the balance of payments remain under pressure as the trade deficit widens) and unforeseen threats as highlighted by the May 2014 Ebola epidemic, problems of poor infrastructure and widespread rural and urban impoverishment.^v Ingrained corruption and the mismanagement of state resources place Sierra Leone among the poorest countries in the world with 74.8% of its population living under the poverty line and 87.7% underemployed.^{vi}

Although Sierra Leone’s political system has been gradually democratizing since the end of the civil war in 2002, the main political parties, the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) and the All People’s Congress (APC), are still sustaining their ethno-regional political rivalry. For

^{iv} Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI). (2018). *Country Report, Sierra Leone*. Page 17. Retrieved from https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Sierra_Leone.pdf.

^v The World Bank. (2018). *Country Report, Sierra Leone*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/sierraleone/overview>.

^{vi} UNDP. (2018). *HDI, Country Profile, Sierra Leone*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE>.

now, the vast majority of people do not question the legitimacy of the democratic institutions^{vii}. However, the bases of the political and democratic framework of the country remain shaky as its stability is undermined by various factors including low qualifications, mismanagement of public resources, clientelism and corruption within the state apparatus.

Regionally, Sierra Leone is exposed to unforeseeable external factors linked with neighbouring countries of the Mano River, Guinea and Liberia in particular, due to shared porous borders. War nomadism and epidemic diseases like Ebola could be cited among those unforeseeable external factors. The threat of war nomadism has been proved by the key role played by the then Liberian warlord, Charles Taylor, in the terror campaign of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) between 1991 and 2002^{viii}. Regional exposition to epidemics through porous borders between Guinea and Sierra Leone was demonstrated by the widespread Ebola crisis in 2014. Based on these illustrations, socio-political or sanitary instability in neighbouring countries represents a high spill over potential that could affect Sierra Leone's recovery and post-conflict reconstruction.

vii BTI. 2018. *Country Report. Sierra Leone. Page 7. Retrieved from https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Sierra_Leone.pdf*

viii Ward, K. (2003). *Might v. Right: Charles Taylor and the Sierra Leone Special Court. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.ucl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1337&context=hrbrief>*

CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Causes of conflict

Fragmented social institutions and weak social services at regional and local levels, low literacy rates, economic insecurity, weak state institutions failing to respond to complex emergencies, security and rule of law, youth marginalization, and political entrenchment in ethno-regionalism are highlighted as key causes of conflict in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is a religiously tolerant country, with Muslims (78%) coexisting peacefully with Christians (21%).^{ix}

Fragmented social institutions and weak social services at regional and local levels

At regional and local levels, the fragmentation of traditional social institutions and chiefs' social management are sources of conflict. In effect, this fragmentation prevents the emergence of reliable institutions at the national level with the power or legitimacy to broker between them. This is due, among other reasons, to the overlapping structure of local governance that fosters conflicts of interest between local councils and regional Paramount Chiefs (PCs). Moreover, their link to political parties exacerbates the tensions among them and undermines the possibilities for cohesion. Concerning chiefs' social management in their respective areas, land capture prevents access by vulnerable categories such as youth, women, orphans and individuals of lower social status. Indeed, PCs and elders of landowning family lineages still hold power over local land allocation. Rural lands are managed by chiefs to their advantage, and they exclude vulnerable groups by preventing them from mining and accessing agricultural opportunities, vital for survival. If not adequately addressed, the growing frustrations among those marginalized groups pose a potential threat to the social peace in Sierra Leone. These practices could negatively impact political and socio-economic conditions, and contribute to economic insecurity, weak state institutions, challenges to security and the rule of law, youth marginalization, ethno-regionalism and low literacy.

^{ix} ACAPS. (2014). *Sierra Leone, Country Profile*. Page 1. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/acaps-country-profile-sierra-leone.pdf>

Low literacy

The literacy rate in Sierra Leone among individuals who are 15 years old and above is estimated at 32.4% of the total population.^x In other words, a majority of the population does not have the ability to read, calculate or write comprehensively. Furthermore, the comprehension of a functioning and modern state based on democratic principles, even by those who are considered literate, is of great concern in Sierra Leone. In such a situation, the majority of the population, especially the youth, remains fragile and can be easily manipulated by political parties.^{xi} The political elite takes advantage of this fragility to mobilize disenfranchised people through intricate patronage networks that fuel internal turmoil and seriously threaten peace in the country.

Economic insecurity

Sierra Leone's socio-economic situation reveals the persistence of pre-war practices such as clientelism, patronage, corruption, and the unfair distribution of state resources. The management of the formal economy remains in large part a potential area for conflict as it was in the period preceding the civil war.^{xii} For instance, economic growth and job creation, rather than playing a stabilizing role, underpin festering resentments over corruption and the unfair distribution of economic benefits.^{xiii} Moreover, the unexpected Ebola crisis between 2014 and early 2016 highlighted endemic problems of corruption and fraud against which President Ernest Koroma had sworn to fight in 2007.

Cyclical low commodity prices and high levels of inflation also contribute to economic insecurity in the country. In 2015, low commodity prices in the world market negatively affected actual foreign exchange earners such as iron ore and shrunk the Sierra Leonean economy by more than one-fifth of its size.^{xiv} Inflation in Sierra Leone

^x UNDP. (2018). *HDI, Country Profile, Sierra Leone*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/101406>

^{xi} Fofana, U. (2016). *Sierra Leone: Political Violence or Violent Politicians? Politico SL*. Retrieved from <http://politicosl.com/articles/sierra-leones-political-violence-or-violent-politicians>

^{xii} M'cleod, H. & Ganson B. (2018). *The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone*. Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development. Page 5.

^{xiii} M'cleod, H. & Ganson B. (2018). *Ibid*. Page 5.

^{xiv} BTI. (2018). *Country Report: Sierra Leone*. Page 3.

has also been of concern with an average of 28.79% between 1986 and 2018.^{xv} The high cost of goods remains challenging for people's purchasing power and continues to aggravate frustrations and state disaffection among citizens.

Weak state institutions failing to respond to complex emergencies

Sierra Leone's state institutions remain weak due to several factors such as corruption, political and ethno-regional divides, and the failure to promptly respond to complex emergencies. During the Ebola crisis, long-standing corruption in the state apparatus fostered the spread of the virus and caused the state, to some extent, to fail in responding to the emergency^{xvi}. In addition, during the 2017 Regent landslide, the state institutions were once again unable to provide support to the victims of the natural disaster^{xvii}. Hence, frustration and state disaffection increased among the citizenry and manifested during the 2018 elections.^{xviii}

The weaknesses of Sierra Leone's state institutions also result from political and ethno-regional divides. These divides prevent Sierra Leone from building strong and sustainable institutions as parties seek to weaken each other instead of making efforts towards a national consensus. For instance, during the Ebola crisis, members of the SLPP spread rumours that the government was using the virus as a device to depopulate their strongholds preceding the planned national census^{xix}. In response, the APC government attempted to muzzle opposition and dissident voices who were criticizing its inability to respond properly to the Ebola crisis^{xx}.

Security and the rule of law

Security in Sierra Leone is provided by two institutions,

^{xv} *Trading Economics*. (2018). *Sierra Leone Inflation Rate*. Retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/sierra-leone/inflation-cpi>.

^{xvi} Fofana, U. (2017). *Where are Sierra Leone's missing Ebola millions?* *BBC News, Freetown*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38718196>

^{xvii} *News24*. (2018, March 7). *Sierra Leone mudslide victims take anger to ballot box*. Retrieved from <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/sierra-leone-mudslide-victims-take-anger-to-ballot-box-20180307>

^{xviii} *Ibid.*

^{xix} Wilkinson, A., & Fairhead, J. (2016). *Comparison of social resistance to Ebola response in Sierra Leone and Guinea suggests explanations lie in political configurations not culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5351787/>

^{xx} *BTI*. (2018). *Country Report: Sierra Leone*. Page 5.

the armed forces and the police.^{xxi} The 1991 constitution mandates the armed forces to guard and secure the country, preserve the safety and territorial integrity of the state, participate in its development, safeguard the people's achievement and protect the constitution.^{xxii} The police forces are dedicated to the internal security and protection of the citizenry in day to day life. However, a limited budget impacts on the capacities of the armed forces and the police, leading to poor pay and underpinning corrupt behaviours among their members. In due course, these forces fail to build trustful relationships with citizens as they are perceived to be corrupted and unreliable.

Three different legal systems coexist in Sierra Leone - the general law, based on the British colonial-era system; the customary law, consisting of unwritten traditional codes and practices protected in the constitution; and statutes in Islamic law concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance applied locally.^{xxiii}

Since the end of the war in 2002, the government, in collaboration with international donors, has worked to protect the judicial system against corruption and unnecessary executive influence. In this regard, steps were taken to reinforce judicial institutions such as the police, courts and penitential establishments. These reforms brought about encouraging results such as the adoption of a judicial code of conduct and the creation of a national anti-corruption commission among others. However, the enforcement of the rule of law in Sierra Leone remains seriously hampered by poor coordination within the sector, which continues to inhibit complete reform, while undue executive influence remains a relentless problem. Long delays in hearing cases, lack of adequate legal aid services, discriminatory laws, and allegations of corruption continue to impede universal access to justice.^{xxiv}

^{xxi} *The police forces are functioning under the police Act of 1964 while the armed forces are under the military forces Act of 161.*

^{xxii} *Article 165 (2).*

^{xxiii} *ACAPS*. (2014). *Ibid. Page 2. An estimated 85% of the population falls under the jurisdiction of this form of law.*

^{xxiv} *Suma, M. (2014), Sierra Leone Justice Sector and the Rule of Law A review by AfriMAP and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, Page 3.*

Youth marginalization

Youth marginalization is a historical concern in Sierra Leone in both the formal and traditional management of public affairs.^{xxv} At the traditional level, youth are not included in decision-making, and are denied access to vital resources such as land, preventing them from agricultural and mining opportunities. At the national level, youth have no voice and are excluded from state resource management and the benefits of redistribution amid the high levels of youth underemployment in the country.^{xxvi} Furthermore, since the pre-war period university students have been repressed by security forces while protesting for better living conditions^{xxvii}. This exclusionary system has the potential to foster an emergence of 'social pariah' groups, who could threaten social peace and be easily mobilized in electoral and other forms of violence.

Ethno-regional tensions

Ethno-regional tensions in Sierra Leone involve the two largest ethnic groups - the Mende (31% of the total population) and the Temne (35%). The latter is closely linked to the Limba (8%). While the Mende are located in the south and south-east, the Temne and Limba are based in the north. Prior to independence, the Mende and Temne struggled to fight colonial rule and foreign control of state resources. As an alternative, the educated elite mobilized along their ethnic identities to fulfil the agenda of the local chiefs, which aimed at controlling power and state resources in favour of connected clans, through political parties. Since then, the ethno-regional divide between the SLPP, labelled as a Mende party, and the APC, supported by the Temne and Limba people, has been sustained at national and local levels to secure clan interests^{xxviii}. This ethno-regional divide continues to be used in the mobilization of voters by political parties, maintaining the connection between local chiefs and political parties. In practice, chiefs depend on connected elites for resources while connected elites rely on them to maintain political influence in their respective areas.

^{xxv} Bangura, I. (2016). *We Can't Eat Peace: Youth, Sustainable Livelihoods and the Peacebuilding Process in Sierra Leone*. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 11:2, pp37-50. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2016.1181003>.

^{xxvi} Bangura, I. (2016), *ibid.* Page 40.

^{xxvii} Bangura, I. (2016), *ibid.* Page 40.

^{xxviii} Sheriff, M., Elvira M. J., Kamara, B. (2005). *TRC Report A Senior Secondary School Version. Truth and Reconciliation Working Group (TRWG)*. Page 19.

ACTORS

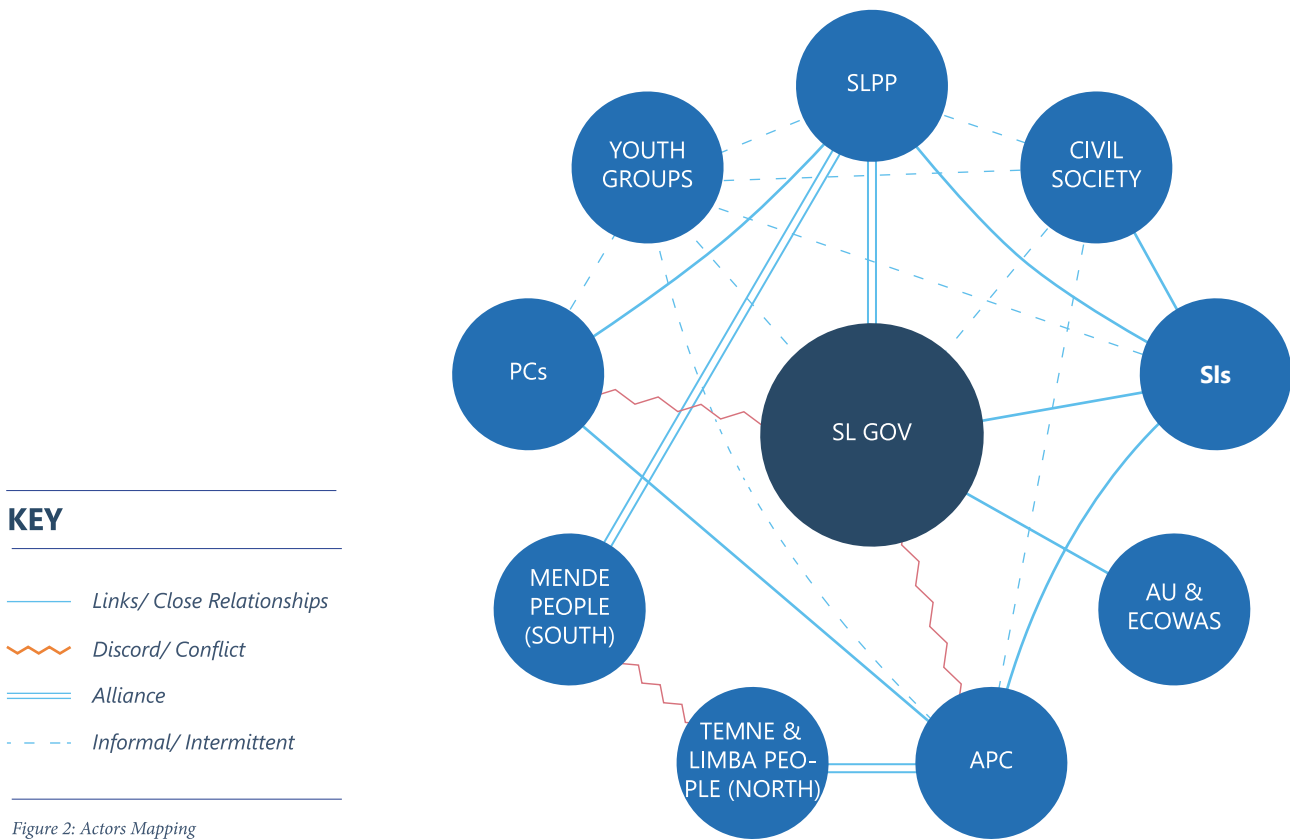


Figure 2: Actors Mapping

Sierra Leone's conflict analysis shows six categories of actors. These categories include major political actors, the local and chiefdom councils, youth groups, government actors, security institutions, and civil society.

Political actors

Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)

The SLPP was the first political party to rule Sierra Leone following independence, making it one of the oldest and most prominent political parties in the country. The party was founded in 1951 by Sir Milton Margai (a longstanding adviser to the PCs) and Siaka Stevens after the British opened up the Legislative Council. SLPP strongly advocated for the idea of having elections before independence as opposed to independence before elections. The party was established with the intention to address and solve the socio-economic and political problems of ordinary men and women as the "country men's party". Margai was a prominent player in leading the country to independence, having managed the drafting of a new constitution to facilitate the decolonization process. The constitution led to the adoption of a parliamentary system within the Commonwealth of Nations in 1958 and Margai was officially instated as Prime Minister.

Unlike its current composition, at its founding the SLPP did not comprise of elites hailing from the south and east of the country. Following Margai's death in 1964, his half-brother Sir Albert Margai took over the SLPP leadership and governed Sierra Leone until 1967, when he lost to the APC. Sir Albert faced major dissent due to his monocratic leadership and his endeavours to strengthen the position of SLPP traditional elites (the backbone of his party) in the south and the east^{xxix}. Following Sir Albert's fall, the party returned to power under the leadership of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who won the 1996 presidential election amid the civil war. It remained in power until 2007, losing to the APC led by Ernest Bai Koroma.^{xxx} The SLPP subsequently made a comeback in the March 2018 presidential elections with the election of Julius Maada Bio, the fifth and current President of Sierra Leone.

The All People's Congress (APC)

The APC is the other major political party in Sierra Leone, and acts as a significant competitor to the SLPP. It was established in 1962 by Siaka Stevens, formerly a co-

^{xxix} Hayward, F.M. (Sep., 1984). *Political Leadership, Power, and the State: Generalizations from the Case of Sierra Leone*. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3. pp. 19-39. Cambridge University Press.

^{xxx} Ernest Bai Koroma is a Sierra Leonean politician who served as the 4th President of Sierra Leone from 17 September 2007 to 4 April 2018.

founder of the SLPP and a member of the Limba ethnic group located in the north of the country. Similar to the SLPP, the APC began as a party that stood for the socio-economic and political rights of Sierra Leonean citizens. Stevens exploited the dissatisfaction of northern and eastern ethnic groups within the SLPP to forge a stronger APC at the 1962 post-independence election. Although the APC did not win the elections, it became the major opposition party and won several seats in parliament. Stevens won the next general elections in 1967 but was briefly detained by the military, before being reappointed in 1968 following a counter coup d'état. Once in power, Stevens reconstructed and operated the same model of governance based on paramount chieftaincy in the rural areas, while his national government operated from the capital city of Freetown. Three years later, the APC introduced a Republican Constitution which was later ratified by parliament, with Stevens becoming the President.

Following Stevens' death in 1988, the APC remained in power until Joseph Momoh was overthrown by Captain Valentine Strasser who created the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) that ruled Sierra Leone from 1992 to 1996.^{xxxii} In the post-war period, the party won two consecutive terms in 2007 and 2012, before losing to the SLPP in 2018.

Local and chiefdom councils

In addition to the national government, local and chiefdom councils are two important spheres of influence in Sierra Leone. The Local Government Act of 2004 serves as the legal framework for the 19 local councils in the country. It gives local and chiefdom councils the authority to collect revenue through "local taxes, property rates, licenses, fees and charges and to receive mining revenues, interest and dividends"^{xxxiii}. These councils, therefore, have legislative, financial and administrative powers. Paramount Chiefs (PCs) are important institutions in these councils and their non-abolition by legislation is guaranteed and preserved in the constitution. The Chieftaincy Act of 2009 appoints different roles to PCs. They collect taxes, maintain order in local government, supervise development agendas, manage the election of sub-chiefs, and furthermore preserve the customs and traditions of their chiefdoms. At the national level, one PC from each district functions as a Member of Parliament (MP). It is through a symbiotic relationship of both bottom-up and top-down relationships between the national government, the

local councils and the chiefdom councils that the Sierra Leonean government operates.

Youth groups

Youth groups have played a key role in Sierra Leone's politics for decades. In the pre-war period, a series of protests led by university youth for increased political and social representation prompted the government to respond violently. The resulting frustrations due to the violent crackdowns by the government contributed, to some extent, to fuelling the civil war. In fact, the a large number of youth participated as combatants in the civil war.^{xxxiii} In the immediate post-war period, young ex-combatants and idle youth were co-opted by political parties as muscle to intimidate each other.^{xxxiv} This manipulation of youth reached its peak in 2007 when Solomon Berewa and Ernest Bai Koroma, the respective candidates of the SLPP and the APC, used them to perpetrate violence during the general elections.^{xxxv}

Currently, there is growing tension due to the likelihood of gangs and street youth associations to be mobilized by political actors to attack opponents and intimidate voters during electoral processes. The SLPP and the APC are suspected of recruiting gangs and street cliques for political purposes. Some gang members reported receiving large payments from intermediaries of political parties with the expectation that in turn, they would support them politically.^{xxxvi}

On 26 January 2018, fighting broke out between different gangs wielding machetes and knives during an APC rally, further underpinning the idea of gang mobilization by political parties.^{xxxvii} The relationship between marginalized youth and political parties has not changed significantly since the civil war. The reality is a replication of the post-war period where ex-combatants were recruited and used to carry out violence against opponents^{xxxviii}.

^{xxxiii} Bangura, I. (2016). *We Can't Eat Peace: Youth, Sustainable Livelihoods and the Peacebuilding Process in Sierra Leone*. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 11:2,

pp37-50. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2016.1181003>.

^{xxxiv} Mitton, K. (2016). *Generation Terrorists: The Politics of Youth and the Gangs of Freetown*. Retrieved from <https://matsutas.wordpress.com/2018/02/26/generation-terrorists-the-politics-of-youth-and-the-gangs-of-freetown-by-kieran-mitton/>

^{xxxv} Solomon Ekuma Dominic Berewa was Vice-President of Sierra Leone from May 2002 to September 2007. Standing as the candidate of the Sierra Leone People's Party, he was defeated in the second round of the 2007 presidential election by Ernest Bai Koroma.

^{xxxvi} Mitton, K. (2016). *ibid.*

^{xxxvii} African Press Agency. (2018, January). *Sierra Leone: Criminal gangs blamed for political violence, Freetown*. <http://apaneus.net/index.php/en/news/sierra-leone-police-blame-criminal-gangs-for-political-violence>

^{xxxviii} Mitton, K. (2016). *Generation Terrorists: The Politics of Youth and the Gangs of Freetown*. Retrieved from <https://matsutas.wordpress.com/2018/02/26/generation-terrorists-the-politics-of-youth-and-the-gangs-of-freetown-by-kieran-mitton/>

^{xxxii} *Sierra Herald*. (1992, April 29). *The lessons of history*. vol XI n°2.

^{xxxiii} *The Republic of Sierra Leone* (2004). *The local government Act. Article 45* (4). Retrieved from <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2004-1p.pdf>

Security institutions

Security institutions in Sierra Leone comprise of the armed forces and the police as per the 1991 Constitution.^{xxxix} While its armed forces are ruled by the Military Forces Act of 1961, Sierra Leone's police is governed by the Police Act of 1964. As in the past, the police and the armed forces have failed to build trustful relationships with citizens, although they may not be considered as veto powers or primary instruments of terror.^{xl} Issues of corruption, use of excessive force when dealing with young people^{xli}, a lack of law enforcement agencies in remote communities, and political interference, all emerge contentious issues facing the security sector. These factors greatly undermine public perceptions of law enforcement agencies, especially the police. The targeting of civil society activists and political interference in areas perceived to be opposition strongholds should be carefully monitored to prevent perceptions of mistrust and bias among citizens. Army soldiers live in poor conditions due to a limited budget. This, combined with political interference and opportunities for corruption, could increase frustration and create conditions for internal conflict.

Civil Society

In Sierra Leone, civil society consists of international and local civil society organizations (CSOs) that work towards the reinforcement of stability and development in the country. This analysis focuses on the emerging role of local CSOs in conflict mitigation. In the aftermath of the civil war, there was a need for checks and balances in the use of power within Sierra Leone's governance system. In this regard, civil society was stated among the potential counterbalances, and its enhancement was viewed as a priority by the UN, among other partners of Sierra Leone^{xlii}. The growing number of CSOs and pressure groups in various domains including business, trade, women's rights, human rights and governance is an indication of the existence of guaranteed freedom of expression and assembly by the current constitution.^{xliii} CSOs play a diverse role towards putting in place democratic checks and balances through observing and criticizing the performance of the government on issues like corruption and insufficient availability of public services among others. They are mainly funded through

international cooperation with foreign donors including the EU and the IMF^{xliv}.

Overall, the empowerment of civil society contributes to reinforcing democratic institutions of Sierra Leone both by strengthening the accountability of service providers to the most marginalized and providing feedback for policymakers.^{xlv} For example, the persistent activism of civil society counterbalanced the authoritarian will of the government to suppress public expression of disaffection through the health state of emergency instituted during the EVD outbreak^{xlvi}. CSOs are pivotal actors in conflict mitigation. In the run-up to the 2018 elections, a manifesto was adopted by leaders of local CSOs to mitigate electoral violence^{xlvii}. It has been seen generally seen as a good start and signed by 40 CSOs^{xlviii}. However, civil society traditions remain weak and most of the local CSOs lack sufficient resources and political leverage.

^{xxxix} Articles 155 and 165 (1)

^{xl} Armed institutions have been involved in several coup d'états in late the 1960s and in the 1990s.

^{xli} This unprofessionalism significantly erodes the trust and confidence of the public in the force.

^{xlii} Mcleod, H. & Ganson B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 21.

^{xliii} Chapter iii. *The recognition and protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual, article 15 (b).*

^{xliv} BTI. (2018). *Country Report: Sierra Leone.* Page 27.

^{xlv} Country profile 2017–18 www.clgf.org.uk/sierra_leone.

^{xlvi} Mcleod, H. & Ganson B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 26.

^{xlvii} Mcleod, H. & Ganson B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 33.

^{xlviii} Amnesty International. (2018). *The Sierra Leone Civic Space Manifesto.* Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR5175932017ENGLISH.PDF>

CONFLICT DYNAMICS

In January 2002, an official ceremony featuring late Sierra Leonean President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the former Ghanaian President John Kufuor, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) interim leader Issa Sessay, was organized in Lungi to mark the end of the 10-year civil war and open the path for post-war reconstruction.^{xlix} Since that ceremony, several efforts have been made to improve democracy in Sierra Leone. From 2002 to 2018, four democratic elections were organized; with all being generally accepted as free and fair by observers.^l Notably, each round resulted in relatively peaceful transitions of power between the SLPP and the APC. However, these elections also outlined a persistent north-south divide along party lines.

In 2007, presidential and parliamentary elections took place for the first time without oversight from the UN peacekeeping mission, which had left the country two years earlier. The elections were supposed to be an entry point for Sierra Leone's recovery from violence; however, the campaigns resulted in violence between SLPP and APC supporters, leading President Kabbah to threaten to suspend the electoral process and impose a state of emergency.^{li} Solomon Berewa, the presidential candidate of SLPP, accused the opposition of intimidating his voters while reports of an assassination attempt on Ernest Koroma, the APC candidate, caused riots and the abandonment of his campaign in the south-east. Dozens of people were recorded injured in clashes in Freetown and Kono.^{lii} APC eventually won the elections with 54.62% of the votes for the presidential seat after a disputed runoff, and 59 out of 124 parliamentary seats.^{liii}

The local government elections held in July 2008 were marred by a high number of contending candidates, due to the APCs' decision to withdraw from the race alleging a campaign of intimidation by SLPP opponents.^{liv}

xlix A small coastal town located in Port Loko District in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone.

l The AU, ECOWAS, the UN, The EU and the Carter Center among others.

li Bangura, I., & Kovacs, M. *Violence in African Election: Between democracy and big man politics. Chapter 5. Competition, Uncertainty, and Violence in Sierra Leone's Swing District.* Retrieved from <https://www.transitioninternational.com/ti/competition-uncertainty-and-violence-in-sierra-leones-swing-district/>

lii Bangura, I., & Kovacs, M. *Ibid.*

liii National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone.

liv The Carter Center. (2012). *Observing Sierra Leone's November 2012 National Elections, Final Report.*

Subsequent local electoral races were characterized by violence and marked by a low turnout of voters^{lv} due to the traditional mobilization of connected chiefs and cliques to intimidate opponents^{lvi}.

The 2012 elections brought about renewed trust in APC, resulting in the re-election of Ernest Bai Koroma as president with 58.7% of the votes and 67 seats in parliament. Although this election period was said to be less violent than that of 2007, it was contested by the SLPP through an official petition which was later rejected by the Supreme Court.

In 2015, as in previous elections, tensions escalated into violence in the district of Kono between the supporters of the opposition SLPP and the incumbent APC during a parliamentary by-election. Well-known political figures accompanied by supporters were transported from the capital to provide support to their respective candidates. The process turned violent, resulting in a rift between the supporters of both political parties.^{lvii} That rift prompted President Koroma to issue a decree authorizing the deployment of the national army in Kono. It was once more a manifestation of marginalized youth being manipulated by political parties to intimidate opponents during electoral cycles.

The 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak highlighted the chronic corruption ingrained in state management and revealed the government's limitations and effectiveness, particularly, in accessing the hinterlands. The epidemic demonstrated the poor state of institutions and their inability to respond properly to unforeseen threats in Freetown and the hinterlands. Almost all the institutions failed, including health services, institutions in charge of complex emergencies, internal communications, and border control, among others, to tackle the epidemic. Furthermore, the imposed state of emergency during the EVD crisis worsened the situation and, in effect, was used by the government to silence opponents regarding

lv The Carter Center. (2012). *Ibid.*

lvi Bangura, I., & Kovacs, M. *Ibid.*

lvii Thomas, A.R. (2015, December 18). *Did Sierra Leone vice president Foh's hate speech spark violence in Kono? Freetown.* Retrieved from <https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/did-sierra-leone-vice-president-fohs-hate-speech-spark-violence-in-kono/>

arbitrary arrests and repression of those who criticized government efforts^{lviii}. The epidemic was also used by opponents to weaken and attack the government. Among other illustrations, there were widespread allegations about the intention of the government to depopulate SLPP's strongholds using Ebola as a strategy as mentioned above.

In August 2017, the mudslide that occurred in the Regent area near Freetown showed once more the fragility and inability of the government to respond promptly to unforeseen disasters. International support from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the IMF, the World Bank and the EU has provided crucial support to the Sierra Leonean government.^{lix} Beyond contributing to tackling those disasters, the goodwill expressed through donor aid, to some extent, balanced grievances among the population.

Presidential and parliamentary elections held in March 2018, hailed as peaceful by international observers, were yet again marred by youth-led riots supporting the SLPP and APC. Defeated Samura Kamara immediately declared that he would mount a legal challenge against the results, alleging massive ballot-stuffing, over-voting and fraudulent voter registers.^{lx} Riots between SLPP and APC supporters (SLPP supporters were suspected of starting the riots) were reported in Freetown and Kenema although Julius Maada Bio was later sworn in as the new president.^{lxi}

There are growing tensions between the SLPP and the APC concerning the anti-corruption reforms, which are viewed as a "witch hunt" by APC members. On 10 March 2019, the APC called for acts of national disobedience to protest against "human rights violations" and abuse by the government.^{lxii} Even though the call has not been generally heeded, actions of this nature may be repeated in the near future and any potential disruption will need to be carefully monitored.

President Bio's creation of a new ministerial position, Chief Minister, sparked widespread debate. It is viewed as a superfluous position not only by the opposition parties but also among SLPP supporters. Critics pointed to growing doubt and fears about the probability of Bio repeating Koroma's profligate spending and inability to generate revenue that led the IMF to suspend its loans.^{lxiii} The president defended the new position as

one of a range of reforms aimed at strengthening state institutions and fighting the long-lasting corruption in the country.^{lxiv}

In the perpetual fight between SLPP and APC, the local government acts as a platform for further disgruntlement among key actors like the PCs and underemployed youth. For decades, PCs have been the local hands of both political parties due to entrenched electoral loyalties and corruption practices that created a commonly-held belief that elections are "winner takes all" contests. In this regard, chiefs are used by political parties as a strategic implementing instrument to curtail campaigns by mobilizing youth through their patronage networks. One example was the alliance between Ernest Bai Koroma and Chief Samuel Sam Sumana, who mobilized young people in Kono to intimidate opponents in 2007^{lxv}. However, with the new government elected in March 2018, the mindset of "winner takes all" is losing significance as political appointments are being made from opposition parties^{lxvi}.

In rural areas, most of the youth remain jobless and vulnerable to political manipulation. The expectation of rewards through the patronage of chiefs makes them easy to recruit as foot soldiers of violence^{lxvii}. Hence, when electoral races approach in swing districts and government strongholds, chiefs are mobilized by political parties using promises and financial benefits. In turn, the chiefs mobilize youth to intimidate and assault political opponents. In response, international pressure from donors and mediation efforts led by the UN have been central to mitigating inter-party conflict by keeping the spoilers at bay in the sustained ethno-regional rivalry between the SLPP and the APC^{lxviii}.

The predominant conflict trends in Sierra Leone are outlined by a negative peace, characterized by a growing disaffection between the state and citizens. This is fostered by the inability of the government to respond properly to their concerns or expectations. Political violence during election periods, as well as endemic corruption and its related drawbacks such as unemployment and high levels of poverty, are chronically ingrained in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, the newly elected government is taking steps to regulate the situation in spite of its tense relationship with the main opposition party.

lviii BTI. (2018). *Country Report: Sierra Leone*. Page 10.

lix Musabayana, W. (2016, February). *The African Union's intervention in the Ebola crisis was a "game changer"*. Retrieved from <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20160211>.

lx Shaban, A.R.A. (2018, April). *Sierra Leone Runoff: Loser to challenge results in court*, Africa news, Freetown. Retrieved from <https://www.africanews.com/2018/04/05/sierra-leone-runoff-loser-heads-to-court-over-irregularities/>

lxi Thomas, A.R. (2018 April). *Election violence makes a comeback in Sierra Leone*, *The Sierra Leone Telegraph*, Freetown. Retrieved from <https://www.thesierraleonetelgraph.com/election-violence-makes-a-comeback-in-sierra-leone/>

lxii Information got from ECOWAS Early Warning System and Response Network.

lxiii Thomas, A.R. (May 2018). *Controversy over appointment of chief minister of Sierra Leone*, *the Sierra Leone telegraph*, Freetown. <https://www.thesierraleonetelgraph.com/controversy-over-appointment-of-chief-minister-of-sierra-leone/>

lxiv *The patriotic vanguard*. (2018, December 11). *Sierra Leone: National address by President Bio on corruption*. Retrieved from <http://www.thepatrioticvanguard.com/sierra-leone-national-address-by-president-bio-on-corruption>

lxv Bangura, I., & Kovacs, M. *Ibid*.

lxvi *Statement from the Vice Ambassador of Sierra Leone in Ethiopia and at the African Union during the Round Table organised by IPSS on Sierra Leone and Lesotho*, March 13, 2019.

lxvii Bangura, I., & Kovacs, M. *Ibid*.

lxviii BTI. (2018). *Country Report: Sierra Leone*. Page 32.

CURRENT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

The African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played a key role in mitigating the civil war that occurred in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. The following analysis will examine the post-war interventions of the AU and ECOWAS, particularly during the Ebola crisis (2014-2016) and the Regent mudslide of 2017.

Through the West African Health Organization (WAHO), ECOWAS was the leading regional actor during the Ebola crisis (EVD)^{lxcix} and the mudslide^{lxcx}. During the early stages of the Ebola outbreak, ECOWAS proactively took steps to respond by officially considering EVD as a regional threat and, through its member states, put in place a solidarity fund to support Sierra Leone in its efforts to tackle EVD^{lxcxi}. Beyond financial support, ECOWAS member states also provided medical personnel, materials and drugs. These interventions positively impacted the situation by containing the spread of the disease and protecting threatened neighbouring countries^{lxcxii}.

Still, the ECOWAS intervention during Ebola crisis was hampered by some major weaknesses. The inexistence of a system of response to unforeseen threats caused the institution to set up an ad-hoc system through WAHO^{lxcxiii}. Despite its proactivity at the beginning of the outbreak, the fundraising to feed the solidarity fund took too long. Decision making through summits also slowed the response process as discussions to find the adequate strategy of intervention were drawn out. They also relied too much on inadequate and insufficient institutions in Sierra Leone. The virus spread unnoticed without adequate surveillance by the national governments of member states. Furthermore, ECOWAS failed to recognize the need for additional health personnel as those on the ground were overstretched^{lxcxiv}.

Beyond the EVD emergency, ECOWAS also supported Sierra Leone during the devastating mudslide that occurred in 2017 in Regent district near Freetown. Once again, although faced with similar weaknesses, ECOWAS was proactive and responded based on the same

lxcix Bappah, H.Y. *Human security in practice: securing people from the threat of epidemic — what can we learn from the ECOWAS response to Ebola? Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, Vol 37, No 1. Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-429632256/human-security-in-practice-securing-people-from-the>

lxcx West African Health Organization (WAHO). (2017, August). *Sierra Leone Mudslide Support*. Retrieved from <https://w3.wahooas.org/web-oas/en/actualites/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-mudslide-support>

lxcxi Bappah, H.Y. *Ibid.*

lxcxii Bappah, H.Y. *Ibid.*

lxcxiii Bappah, H.Y. *Ibid.*

lxcxiv Bappah, H.Y. *Ibid.*

contingency plans that had been implemented for the Ebola epidemic^{lxcv}.

The AU, in partnership with other regional institutions including the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the private sector, greatly contributed to the containment of Ebola. The AU mobilized a large number of medical personnel, and also provided material and financial support. US\$1,200,000 was provided to cover the three affected countries, including Sierra Leone. Known as the African Union Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA), a substantial portion of the 835 African personnel - including medical and non-medical personnel - was deployed in Sierra Leone. The AU's intervention was well received and considered as a "game changer" by observers^{lxcvi}, who noted that the continental scale intervention was enriched by innovative cooperation and collaboration among different African institutions including the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Mechanisms (RMs), and the private sector.

The AU's weaknesses involved delays in responses; lack of effectiveness in some areas; gaps in information, communication and surveillance; inadequate engagement of regional organizations; and late engagement of communities.^{lxcvii} These weaknesses, to some extent, fostered mistrust between interveners and targeted people in Sierra Leone and in the region.

Since 2002, international organizations have been closely monitoring elections in Sierra Leone. In 2018, ECOWAS, AU, EU and the UN jointly observed the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections with the overarching goal of reducing the risks of violence through multi-stakeholder advocacy with political parties, civil society, youth and the grassroots.

lxcv West African Health Organization (WAHO). (2017, August). *Sierra Leone Mudslide Support*. Retrieved from <https://w3.wahooas.org/web-oas/en/actualites/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-mudslide-support>

lxcvi Musabayana, W. (2016, February). *The African Union's intervention in the Ebola crisis was a "game changer"*. Retrieved from <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20160211>

lxcvii Bappah, H.Y. *Human security in practice: securing people from the threat of epidemic — what can we learn from the ECOWAS response to Ebola? African Leadership Centre King's College London, United Kingdom, Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, Vol 37, No 1; Pg.196.

SCENARIOS

Best case scenario

The best-case scenario for Sierra Leone would be a commitment by the government and state institutions to becoming more transparent and accountable. Parliamentary power retained by the opposition could be a key counterbalance to corruption, clientelism and impunity and lead the government to meet and implement its electoral promises. Increased collaboration between the parties would privilege dialogue and peaceful means of decision-making, thereby mitigating the risk of conflict. This would have a ripple effect at the local levels by creating a culture of tolerance between the supporters of SLPP and APC. Furthermore, transparency and accountability could bring about better management of state resources, enhance the national economy and reduce the levels internal and external debts.

Worst-case scenario

The worst-case scenario for the country would be an unwillingness for both the ruling party (SLPP), and the opposition (APC) - who have a majority of parliamentary seats, to collaborate and promote dialogue in public management and governance. Rather than collaboration, they would sustain their traditional ethno-regionalism rivalry ingrained to conquer or conserve power. The day to day life of Sierra Leoneans would be marked by political tensions as illustrated by the call for civil disobedience made by the APC in March 2019. The next general elections would likely be marred by violence as leaders of APC would mobilize local chiefs and youth in order to maintain their predominance in parliament. The same would also be true for the SLPP as the party may attempt to claim control in parliament by winning more seats and consolidating its position. If swing districts such as Kono would be monitored closely, the strongholds of the APC and the SLPP could experience violence as each party would be likely to protect its traditional areas by intimidating opponents. The volatility of the national economy could be a key game changer. Hence, another collapse in a foreign exchange earner such as iron ore or oil could be of serious concern.

Most likely scenario

In this scenario, it is likely that neither the ruling party nor the opposition would take steps to improve the current situation. Each party would seek to weaken the opponent using traditional means: sustaining ethno-regional opposition and the mobilization of idle youth to engage in violence and intimidation during electoral processes. Accusations of favouritism on each side would remain, and anti-corruption actions led by the current government could be perceived as purely political by the opposition. Moreover, the controversial creation of the position of Chief Minister is likely to foster doubt and disaffection among populations regarding the difficulties faced by the government to cover wages in the public sector. Hence, the status quo of fragility due to weak institutions would be maintained.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

To the state of Sierra Leone

In line with the Sierra Leonean constitution the government of the Republic of Sierra Leone should implement Articles 27(3) and 6(1), which comprise the formation of participatory and inclusive social dialogues at national and local levels. This action should involve a cross-section of the Sierra Leonean social fabric in order to reduce the social tensions and ethno-regional divides in the country.^{lxxviii}

The government of Sierra Leone should consequently enhance its disaster response system to build trust with its citizenry. It should invest in rapid response teams, surveillance, lab diagnostics, risk communication, infection prevention and control measures. In addition, it should also maintain a rigorous nation-wide hygiene campaign, particularly addressing practices at home and in health facilities while banning construction in risky areas prone to mudslides.

The state should take steps to enhance the private sector and use it as a job creator and poverty reducer. To achieve this goal, the state should elaborate and apply legal measures to facilitate local entrepreneurship. It should also agree through Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with international companies to privilege national human resources.

To the AU and ECOWAS

The AU and ECOWAS should improve and continue their response systems for more efficiency in handling catastrophes. In this respect, the ongoing implementation of national centres of response in ECOWAS member states should be sustained jointly by the AU and ECOWAS to improve communication systems and provide adequate training to staff involved in disaster response. ECOWAS should build the capacities of national institutions and transfer knowledge and good practices resulting from their respective experiences.

The AU and ECOWAS should encourage Sierra Leone's leadership to commit to combat corruption and the

unfair distribution of state resources in Sierra Leone. Independent audit institutions should be collaboratively promoted and reinforced by the AU, ECOWAS and the Sierra Leonean state, in line with ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the African Charter on Democracy, and in conformity with the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.^{lxxix}

To foreign donors (EU, IMF, World Bank, UK and China)

Foreign donors should closely monitor state resource management to counterbalance unaccountability and corruption within the state apparatus. Such an action would be a catalyst for development in Sierra Leone as it would allow those at lower income levels to benefit from the country's economic growth.

^{lxxviii} Articles 27 (3) and 6 (1).

^{lxxix} Article 38 (1).

^{lxxx} Article 27 (5).

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SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT TIMELINE: 1961-2018

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- 1961 April 27** Sierra Leone gains independence from the United Kingdom.
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- 1967 March 21** A coup overthrows Premier Siaka Stevens' government.
-
- 1968 April 18** Siaka Stevens returns to power as the head of a civilian government following a counter military coup.
-
- 1971 April** Declaration of a republic is made with Siaka Stevens as executive president.
-
- 1978 July** New constitution proclaims Sierra Leone to be a one-party state with the All People's Congress as the singular legal party.
-
- 1985 November 28** Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh becomes president following Stevens' retirement under the one-party system.
-
- 1991 March 23** Civil war begins led by former army corporal Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF).
-
- 1991 September** New constitution providing for a multiparty system is adopted.
-
- 1992 April 29** President Joseph Momoh is ousted in a military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser.
-
- 1996 January 16** Valentine Strasser is ousted in military coup led by his defence minister, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio.
-
- 1996 March 16** Ahmad Tejan Kabbah is elected president and signs a peace accord with Sankoh's rebels.
-
- 1997 May 25** Disagreements on the application of the peace deal leads the army to depose President Kabbah.
-
- 1997 October** The UN Security Council imposes sanctions on Sierra Leone, barring the supply of arms and petroleum products.
-
- 1998 February** Nigerian-led West African intervention force ECOMOG storms Freetown and drives rebels out.
-
- 2002 January 18** The civil war is declared over and the UN mission announces the completion of the disarmament of 45,000 fighters.
-
- 2002 May 14** President Kabbah wins the presidential elections and his Sierra Leone People's Party secures a majority in parliament.
-
- 2004 February** Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants is declared officially completed.
-
- 2004 March** The Local Council Act, which serves as the legal framework for the 19 local councils in Sierra Leone, is revised.
-
- 2007 September 8** Election of Ernest Bai Koroma as President and his All People's Congress, formerly in opposition, wins a majority in parliament.
-

2009 September Adoption of Sierra Leone's Chieftaincy Act.

2012 November 17 First elections since the end of the civil war held without UN oversight. President Koroma wins a second term.

2014 July Sierra Leone declares a state of emergency to tackle the deadly Ebola outbreak which has killed more than 700 in West Africa.

2016 March The World Health Organization declares Sierra Leone Ebola-free for a second time, after a new flare-up in the wake of the first all-clear in November.

2017 August Mudslide in Regent district claims over 1,000 lives and destroys more than 3,000 settlements.

2018 March 31 Former military ruler Julius Maada Bio wins presidential elections as the Sierra Leone People's Party candidate, beating Samura Kamara of the governing All People's Congress.

2018 May Controversy arises over the creation of the new position of chief minister by President Bio.



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